



U.S. Department of Justice

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, July 30, 2010

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BARRY FARM FILM LEADS TO COMMUNITY DISCUSSION U.S. ATTORNEY JOINS IN PUBLIC DIALOGUE, MORE EVENTS PLANNED

WASHINGTON - More than 150 people gathered this week to watch a documentary about the historic Barry Farm neighborhood and join in a community discussion that focused on social issues. The event was hosted by U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr., documentary producer Tendani Mpulubusi El, and Dr. Charles Matthew Hudson Jr., pastor of Matthews Memorial Baptist Church.

The gathering, which took place Tuesday evening, July 27, was one in a series of community events across the District of Columbia in which Machen and others from the U.S. Attorney's Office are engaging in dialogue with the public on safety and criminal justice issues. Machen said that his goal is to "build a bridge" with the public through forums, community-based programs, and teamwork with the District's many neighborhood organizations.

"We are committed to going out into the community to build a partnership and to build trust," Machen said. "Together we can make this a safer place."

The event at Matthews Memorial Baptist Church featured a screening of the new documentary, "Barry Farm: Past and Present." Mpulubusi El, an independent artist, has worked more than a year on the film, which looks at the Southeast Washington neighborhood from a variety of perspectives. He interviewed historians, longtime residents and teenagers about the history and personality of Barry Farm, the first African American community established in Washington after emancipation.

The early history focuses on the work and vision of Oliver Otis Howard, a Civil War general who later became commissioner of the Board of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands. Howard lobbied the federal government to purchase an old tobacco plantation from the Barry family - Barry Farm. The land was sold to newly freed slaves, creating the first Barry Farm community. Howard also founded Howard University, in 1867. The documentary chronicles the excitement as the community was built, highlights famous neighborhood residents, and delves into issues now facing the area.

After the screening, Machen joined the filmmaker in a discussion with Barry Farm residents about concerns facing the community. He said his office will be highly involved and visible in working with neighborhood residents, public officials, law enforcement partners and others on pressing issues.

The U.S. Attorney's Office is committed to a strategy of Community Prosecution, which brings together geographically organized teams of Assistant United States Attorneys (AUSAs), Community Outreach Specialists and other support personnel. They share responsibility for the prosecution of crimes committed within each of the seven MPD Districts. The Community Prosecution team helped coordinate the event and is working with Machen to promote similar efforts across the District.

Machen thanked Assistant U.S. Attorney Rhonda Redwood, the community prosecutor in the Seventh Police District, and others who organized the event as well as Bishop Hudson of Matthews Memorial Baptist Church for allowing the church to be used for the screening. He also thanked the Barry Farm Resident Council, the Metropolitan Police Department and other partners for their work on the program and their efforts on behalf of the community.

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